



Hepatitis B Vaccine

What You Need to Know

Deployment Medication Information Sheets (DMIS) are provided by the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine (USACHPPM). Written for soldiers and their families, they provide basic information on deployment medications that are intended as guidance only; consult your health care provider for more information.

What is hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is a serious disease caused by a virus that attacks the liver. It can cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, and death. The short-term (acute) illness can cause loss of appetite, diarrhea and vomiting, tiredness, jaundice (yellow skin or eyes), and pain in the muscles, joints, and stomach.

How do you get hepatitis B?

Hepatitis B is spread by direct contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person.

- You can become infected by having sex with an infected person.
- Sharing needles with an infected person.
- A baby can get hepatitis B from an infected mother during childbirth.

Who should get the vaccine and how is it given?



The vaccine is recommended for persons of all ages, especially those at risk of getting the disease:

- Persons traveling to high-risk areas.
- Health care personnel.
- Laboratory workers handling blood and patient specimens.
- Police, fire, and emergency medical personnel who give first-aid treatment.
- Persons with blood clotting disorders (such as hemophiliacs).
- Persons who have household and intimate contacts with those who have hepatitis B infections.
- Persons with multiple sex partners.
- Sexually active homosexuals and bisexual men.
- Sexually active men or women who have acquired a sexually transmitted disease.
- Injection drug users.

Your health care provider will give you the vaccine in three injections. You will get three doses over a 6- to 12-month period. For the vaccine to be most effective, follow the vaccination schedule you are given. If you have an infection when your vaccination is scheduled, your health care provider may delay the vaccination until you are better.

What does the military require?

The vaccine is required by the military for high-risk occupational groups who have potential exposure to blood and body fluids from persons infected with the hepatitis B virus. The hepatitis B vaccine is also required for active duty personnel who are having a permanent change of duty station (PCS) to Korea because of the high incidence of hepatitis B in Korea.

Are there any side effects?

- You may have irritation, redness, swelling, warmth, itching, bruising, or pain at the injection site.
- Other side effects include headache, weakness, fatigue, sore throat, fever, nausea, dizziness, flu-like symptoms, and general body discomfort. If these symptoms continue or become bothersome, call your health care provider.
- Call your health care provider if you have tingling of the hands or feet, trouble moving, stiffness, skin rash, difficulty breathing, chest pain, or vision problems.

Is there any reason I shouldn't get the vaccine?

Tell your health care provider if:

- You have an infection, heart disease, lung disease, any illness, or allergies, especially allergies to yeast. If you are hypersensitive to yeast, you should not take the vaccine.
- You're taking any over-the-counter or prescription medicine, especially steroids or prednisone.

What if I'm pregnant or breast-feeding?

- The vaccine should be given during pregnancy only when clearly needed. Talk to your health care provider about the risks and benefits.
- It is not known if the vaccine appears in breast milk. Consult your health care provider before breast-feeding.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose for any reason, get the missed dose as soon as possible and then continue the injection schedule. Do NOT re-start the vaccination series.

You *can* avoid getting hepatitis B!

- Get each vaccination as scheduled.
- Do not have casual sex or sex with multiple partners.
- Do not use IV drugs.
- Do not have sex with high-risk groups such as prostitutes or IV drug users.
- Use condoms.

Be sure the vaccination is recorded in your medical record.

Where can I get more information?

- Health care provider at your military treatment facility.
- Military Immunizations web page: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/immunization/vaccines.html>
- CDC Specific Disease web site: www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm
- CDC Vaccine Information web site: www.cdc.gov/nip/publications/VIS/default.htm

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